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# Local debates on 'global' planning concepts: The 'compact European city' model in postsocialist Russia – The case of Perm'

DANIELA ZUPAN

## Abstract

*Although urban planning and design presents a discipline that is strongly influenced by international and interurban exchange, urban landscapes are far from globally convergent but instead reveal local characteristics and new forms of disparity. In the fields of urban planning and design, the concept of the 'compact European city' replaced the paradigm of functionalist modernism. Although it has been contested too, the concept reached a hegemonic status in Central and Western Europe. The aim of this paper is to trace how the 'compact European city' model is travelling to Russia. Based on the case of Perm' it will be demonstrated that the concept is presented as a counter-model to Soviet and post-Soviet urbanism. Furthermore, it is promoted as a product for a transformation of Russian conurbations into prospering, international, 'European' cities. Local actors, structures and urban legacies acted as an (allowing, transforming, hindering or resisting) infrastructure for the model, which in the case of Perm' finally led to the failure of the strategy. The paper applies two bodies of literature, which involve research on the global transfer of urban concepts on the one hand and studies of postsocialist cities conceptualizing the role of (urban) legacies in the on-going transition on the other hand.*

Perm', Russia, transfer of urban concepts, 'compact European city' model

## Zusammenfassung

**Lokale Debatten über „globale“ Planungskonzepte: Das Modell der kompakten europäischen Stadt im postsozialistischen Russland – das Beispiel Perm'**

*Obwohl Stadtplanung seit jeher eine Disziplin darstellt, die stark durch internationalen Austausch beeinflusst wird, sind Städtelandschaften auf globaler Ebene keineswegs konvergent, vielmehr weisen sie neue Formen von Disparität auf. Im Bereich der Stadtplanung und des Städtebaus hat das Konzept der kompakten europäischen Stadt das Paradigma der funktionalistischen Moderne abgelöst und in Zentral- und Westeuropa einen beinahe hegemonialen Status erreicht. Anhand der Stadt Perm' untersucht dieser Beitrag, wie das Modell der kompakten europäischen Stadt nach Russland wandert. Es wird demonstriert, dass das Konzept als Gegenmodell zum sowjetischen und postsowjetischen Städtebau und als Möglichkeit der Transformation russischer Ballungsräume in prosperierende ‚europäische‘ Städte verhandelt wird. Lokale Akteure, Strukturen und das städtische Erbe agieren als (ermöglichende, transformierende oder hinderliche) Infrastruktur für das Modell, was in Perm' letztlich zum Scheitern der Strategie führte. Als theoretische Basis dienen zwei Forschungsstränge: die in der kritischen Geographie entwickelten Literatur zur policy mobility sowie Studien zur Konzeption des (urbanen) Erbes in postsozialistischen Städten.*

Perm', Russland, Mobilität städtebaulicher Leitbilder, kompakte europäische Stadt

### 'Revolution or Death?'

"Revolution or death!" – this call by Aleksej MURATOV (2010, p. 59) presented in a special issue about the city Perm' in the Russian journal for architecture and urbanism, Proekt Rossija, caught my attention. It aimed at justifying a strategy launched in 2008 by a group of committed stakeholders to lead the city out of crisis. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Perm' had to deal with industrial decline, high unemployment and crime rates and a shrinking population. The creation of a new image for the city was meant to solve these problems. Here, on the border to Siberia, an international cultural centre and the most Eastern European 'capital of culture' were planned to emerge. However, the creative city strategy presented only one part of the overall development plan; working on the urban structure of the city had been an endeavour just as important. Therefore, a Dutch urban design firm (KCAP) had been commissioned to develop a master plan based on the principles of the 'compact European city'. Through the transformation of the urban structure it was intended to create a comfortable environment by 'European standards'.

The creation of images that aim at encouraging the participation in a harsh competition among cities and regions, the involvement of new players in urban development, the hiring of foreign planning practitioners and the intensified international and interurban exchange of planning policies do reflect characteristics of post-Fordist urban development in a 'globalizing' world. However, paying close attention to the process of how the involved actors negotiated the 'compact European city' model, this paper aims at pointing out the 'localness' of global concepts. It will be demonstrated, how local structures and urban legacies act as an (allowing, transforming, hindering or resisting) infrastructure for transnational urban planning concepts. In exploring how the urban model proposed in the master plan has been negotiated, the paper

seeks to answer the following questions: Who are the actors involved in the urban development strategy in Perm'? What are their aims and how do they negotiate the (post-)socialist city in regard to the urban legacies of the past eras? The paper applies two bodies of literature to address these issues: it involves research on policy mobility developed in critical geography to approach the relationship between the transnational flows of planning concepts and their specific local translations. I will relate these approaches to studies of postsocialism conceptualizing the role of (urban) legacies in the on-going transition.

### Localizing global flows of planning concepts in postsocialist Russia

The profound transformations shaping post-Soviet cities include the breakdown of the centralized and hierarchical Soviet system, the introduction of neoliberal reforms, the participation in a competition-oriented economy on a global scale and the handling of urban development issues in the post-Fordist era. In terms of architecture and urban design, post-Soviet Russia experienced an immense inflow of planning practices, policies and urban design models. However, it turns out that these processes did not lead to a 'Europeanization' or 'Internationalisation' of the Russian urban landscape. Rather, specific forms and hybrids evolve. The question arises, how we can grasp and theorize complex, multi-levelled, non-linear, and uncertain transformations that are, though strongly influenced by globalisation and neoliberalisation, still very much 'local' and are building on and evolving out of their specific legacies and contexts. Therefore this paper will bring together different bodies of literature to work out a framework that is able to account for the complex (inter-)relations between the global and the local aspects, without losing the objective of conceiving the role of the urban legacies in the field of urban planning and design in postsocialist Russia.

### Conceptualizing urban legacies in postsocialist Russia

While the profound transformation processes shaping postsocialist cities since the breakdown of the Soviet Union are recognized as far from complete, the open question remains how to theorise the complexity and multiplicity of the on-going transition (SÝKORA and BOUZAROVSKI 2012, pp. 44f.). SÝKORA and BOUZAROVSKI (2012, pp. 44ff.) suggest to think of the transition as proceeding through multiple transformations, breaking them down to three aspects in regard to their time span: institutional transformations (short-term period), social transformations (medium-term period) and urban transformations (long-term period). The institutional transformations include the basic changes in political and economic organisation, the social transformations cover "peoples' behaviours, habits and cultural norms", and the urban transformations embrace urban patterns (ibid., pp. 45f.). They (ibid., p. 48) assume, that the different transformations 'follow' each other in a rather linear way: "The outcomes of the institutional transformations (...) have formed the basic condition for the spontaneous emergence of a series of economic, social and cultural transformations." However, GOLUBCHIKOV et al. (2013, pp. 4f.) point out that the model developed by SÝKORA and BOUZAROVSKI (2012) imagines "the socialist legacy (...) as a fixed point of departure, which gradually fades from view as the journey into transition continues, so that the varied speed with which its presences are fading constitutes the very essence of transitional dynamics". The understanding of the socialist heritage as something that is gradually being replaced and is fading away presents a recurrent metaphor in the research on postsocialist transition: STENNING and HÖRSCHELMANN (2008, p. 312) see "an urgent need to centre our analytical attention on post-socialism *before it is too late*, before any notion of post-socialist difference is subsumed, without question, into our broader discussions of capitalism and globalisation" (original emphasis). De-

scribing the built environment of postsocialist cities, WAGENAAR (2004, p. 9) postulates: "[T]he socialist city has not been replaced by a capitalist one: the capitalist nestles in the socialist city which is still everywhere in evidence."

According to GOLUBCHIKOV et al. (2013, p. 6) such notions imply an understanding "of a parallel co-existence of socialist and capitalist 'ingredients'" and share a rather fixed and absolute understanding of the socialist legacy, which, as they demonstrate, represents a reductionist and simplified notion of the socialist heritage. Instead, they (ibid.) argue for a relative, interpretative and fluid understanding of legacies: "[S]ocialist-era legacies can be seen in a constant process of acquiring new meanings, both influencing and being influenced by on-going economic and social practices and decision-making." Rather than conceiving socialist and capitalist elements as co-existing, they enunciate a co-evolutionary perspective, in which postsocialist capitalism is developing "*from within* the existing structures and relationships" (ibid., original emphasis). In this sense, the socialist legacy is to be understood as "the very infrastructure of neo-liberalisation, within which neoliberal capitalism becomes embedded and which it uses for accumulation" (ibid., p. 7).

### Localizing global flows – research on policy mobility

Even though the international exchange of ideas and concepts in urban planning does not present a new phenomenon, globalisation and post-Fordism led to profound changes in recent decades (HEALEY 2010, pp. 1f.). Instead of nation-states, cities and regions are participating in a harsh competition, often on a global level. New forms of urban governance developed, including the involvement of non-state actors and their interests in urban politics. Due to the increased competitiveness among cities and the emergence of pluralistic models in which influencing stakeholders and decision makers play an important role in urban development, an increase of city marketing and

image building can be observed (GRUBBAUER 2011, pp. 31f.). Studies on the transnational flow of planning concepts (MCCANN and WARD 2010, p. 175; PECK and THEODORE 2010, p. 172) point out that under these conditions an intensification of the exchange of concepts, strategies and ideas as well as an increasing speed of exchange and a growing transnationalisation can be observed. At the same time, "the work of policymaking (...) is itself undergoing change in this environment of increased mobility, as new policies are developed in a comparative frame (with an increased level of consciousness about alternative and complementary policies, deployed elsewhere), as policy peddlers and gurus ply their trade on the international conference circuit, as expertise is insourced from think tanks and consultancies, and so on" (PECK and THEODORE 2010, p. 170, original emphasis).

The process of policy transfer cannot be explained by linear replication, but is far more complex and involves the transformation of concepts on their journey. Policies "rarely travel as complete 'packages', they move in bits and pieces – as selective discourses, inchoate ideas, and synthesized models – and they therefore 'arrive' not as replicas but as policies already-in-transformation" (ibid., pp. 169f.). Furthermore, policies do not simply transit between sites, but they "evolve through mobility, while at the same time (re)making relational connections between policymaking sites" (ibid.) as well as the landscape of policymaking sites themselves. What follows is that: "[T]here is no expectation of global convergence: high rates of policy mobility are not a prelude to one-best-way unification, or some sort of policy monopoly; *new forms* of uneven spatial development, and new localizations, are constantly being produced under such conditions" (ibid., original emphasis). MCCANN and WARD (2010) further conceptualize the relationship between the global and the local. While they describe contemporary policy transfer as characterized by motion and relationality, they point to the fact that

"[p]olicies and policy-making are also intensively and fundamentally local, grounded, and territorial" (MCCANN and WARD 2010, p. 175). Therefore, they (ibid., p. 176) conclude that "urban policy-making must be understood as both relational and territorial; as both in motion and simultaneously fixed, or embedded in place".

Building on the concept of policy mobility, this paper understands the 'compact European city' model not as fixed and stable, but as mutating and evolving out of the embedded contexts, while at the same time changing the landscapes where it 'lands' (HEALEY 2013, p. 1513). To conceptualize the role of legacies in 'localizing' transnational planning concepts, this paper takes on the understanding of legacies as the very infrastructure, being able to have enabling, disabling, strengthening, changing or transforming character. Based on these concepts, this paper will analyse how local mechanisms shaped the concept in specific ways. Furthermore it will explore how the model changes the urban landscape where its implementation is intended. It will be shown how the urban legacies of the past are negotiated with regard to the proposed model of the 'compact European city': Which dominant discourses does the model carry with it? How does this affect the urban heritage of past eras (pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet) – are the legacies of these eras thus acquiring new meanings?

### Methodology

After having outlined the concept of the 'compact European city' and its main characteristics, its introduction in Russia will be addressed. Subsequently, the paper presents the findings of one empirical in-depth case study, which is Perm'. The aim of this paper is not to draw generalizations about urban planning practices in postsocialist Russia, but the single case can help to learn more about the society at large and the context in which it is embedded (BURAWOY et al. 1991, pp. 280f.; SMALL 2009, p. 20). I further choose not a representative, but a unique and out-



standing case for my research: Even though the strategy in Perm' does not present a success story from the initiator's point of view as the whole strategy was met with heavy resistance, the proposed master plan for Perm' is still being promoted as a pioneer and a role model for other Russian cities. Most of Perm's urban structure was erected during Soviet rule, mainly in accordance with modernist principles of urbanism. Thus, the dealing with the Soviet modernist urban structures plays a crucial role for the future development of the city. The strategy in Perm' was the first attempt to introduce the 'compact European city' model, a concept that represents a counter-model to modernist urbanism, on a citywide level in Russia. It aimed at creating an urban vision for the future development of the city. For the study a mix of qualitative research methods has been employed: I draw upon content analyses of government, practitioner and media publications (specialized journals on urban planning, architecture and design, planning documents, blogs, published and unpublished reports), discussions with urban planning experts and observation.

### The concept of the 'compact European city'

The model of the compact, mixed-use European city replaced the concepts of functionalist modernism in the field of urban planning.<sup>1</sup> Although it has been contested too, it reached a hegemonic status in Central and Western Europe in the 1990th. It can be found in manifestos and charters of the European Union, town-planning reports of governments, urban development plans of cities and in programmatic guidelines for the planning of new neighbourhoods (JESSEN 2004, p. 92). According to JESSEN (ibid., p. 93) the model is on the one hand embedded in the notions of a sustainable development with the

aim of creating an environmentally responsible urban development. On the other hand it seeks to meet the mobility requirements of a modern society without destroying their natural resources – as JESSEN (ibid.) claims, a highly contradictory aim. Nonetheless, the model spread beyond the limits of Central and Western Europe and has been shaped by different planning cultures and their cultural, social and political characteristics. It experienced a massive spread, as it combines ecological, social, political, economical and cultural requirements for a future urban development in a single familiar image (ibid.): it is of interest to ecologists because it counteracts urban sprawl and the waste of resources. It is of interest for local politicians, because the model aims at supporting the creation of a lively urban environment, which in turn can strengthen innovation and creativity. The model is addressed to architects and town planners, as it focuses on planning as a key element in urban development. At the same time it embodies a counterpart to the discredited ideas of functionalist modernism.

The concept of the compact, mixed-use European city can be understood as part of the profound shift in planning traditions – mostly referred to as the shift from modernist to postmodernist urban planning – starting in the early 1960s. The book 'Death and Life of great American cities' by JACOBS (1961), a criticism of high-modernist urbanism, can be regarded as one of its roots. Modernist urban planning was itself a critique and a reaction to its predecessor – the city of the 19th century – with its bad sanitary conditions and intense densification, proposing instead the separation of industrial from residential zones and the provision of wide green spaces between buildings to achieve healthy living conditions. However, the CIAM buzzwords of providing light, air and space resulted, especially after World War II, in a mere reduction of urbanism to the calculated fulfilment of basic human needs. Post-war modernism, in the East and the West alike, saw high modernism becoming the

hegemonic model. According to HARVEY (1990, p. 35), the "belief in linear progress, absolute truths and rational planning of ideal social orders" resulted in a modernism being "positivistic, technocratic and rationalistic". The focus on rationality, formality and rigid order created urban landscapes often described as monotonous and cold. However, the urban landscapes erected in the post-war period cannot be understood without bearing in mind the economic and political background of that time and the main goal of ending the housing shortage.

The 'compact European city' evolved out of the events and debates starting in the 1960s and 1970s, a phase characterized by economic recession and the awareness of ending resources. Besides the fact, that ecological issues gained importance and shaped the concept in the course of time, the return to history and historical forms, local assets and urban identity can be seen as an important influence. This resulted in a re-evaluation of the past and the recognition of the importance of (urban) heritage. However, this reassessment comprised only a certain period of urban heritage: The pre-modernist urban structures were rediscovered step by step, while the modernist heritage was instead depicted as a failure and a counter-model for future urban development.

The main characteristics of the 'compact European city' model contain the creation of compact and dense structures to achieve a reasonable ecological footprint, a fine grain mixture of land uses to achieve functional diversity and short distances (which is held against the functional zoning of modernism), eco-friendly mobility, a morphological structure that is based on classical principles of urbanism (grid based separation of streets, squares and courtyards and therefore a separation of public and private spaces instead of interspersed buildings in floating open spaces as produced by modernism) and a high quality of the urban environment. Regarding the planning process, the following aspects are important: urban planning and design evolved from being a technocratic process into one including the involvement of different actors in

<sup>1</sup> In the contemporary urban planning discourse the term 'European city' is used in two different ways (FREY and KOCH 2010, pp. 261f.): On the one hand it refers to an analytical concept which aims at identifying the main characteristics of the European city in contrast to other cities. On the other hand it presents a role model for urban development. This paper refers to the latter understanding of the concept as a role model.

the planning process (e.g. public participation, experts from different disciplines, different forms of stakeholders). While modernism focussed on rationalisation and industrialisation of building methods resulting in repetition, uniformity and monotonous appearances, the 'compact European city' model is characterized by a focus on individuality, identity and diversity. Furthermore, instead of producing finalised proposals, planning focuses on flexibility and small-scale development projects as resources are scarce and society is recognized as ever-changing. While functionalist modernism was influenced by a strong belief in unlimited growth, the concept of the compact city stresses the awareness of limited resources.

### **The 'compact European city' model in Russia**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, cities in Eastern Europe are facing a wide range of challenges. While under Soviet rule the state authorities determined the development of cities, cities in post-Soviet Russia have to compete in a globalized economy. This circumstance presents a difficult task for many Russian cities, because in contrast to the growth of cities in Western Europe which developed 'bottom-up', the socialist urbanization was regulated 'top-down', depending on decisions made by the state authorities: "The role of cities was not determined by their importance as market places, but by their economic designation assigned in the Communist Party headquarters. Thus, no market based economic relations between cities were formed, which made the whole settlement network very vulnerable of system change" (STANILOV 2007b, p. 30). This resulted in polarization processes after the collapse. Whole regions suffer from high unemployment rates and structural depression (BRADE et al. 1998, p. 52). The severe economic crisis led to increased crime rates and social segregation, which in turn resulted in a damaged image of many cities and regions (BRADE 2002, p. 129). The total Russian population began to decline after the collapse and the number of shrinking cities rose

rapidly. To achieve growth even under stagnating conditions (HÄUSSERMANN and SIEBEL 1993, p. 13), attracting investment and residents through city branding became an important endeavour. Encouraged by a territorial programme for socioeconomic development from the national government, regional governments and city administrations actively started to create images and became active players in attracting capital (GOLUBCHIKOV et al. 2013, p. 13).

The *laissez-faire* policy with its lack of regulations following the Soviet period brought about chaotic developments in the urban structure of Russian cities. The 1990s were characterized by a refusal of any regulations on urban development, as "any kind of regulation of urban planning that might in any way limit the ability to take arbitrary decisions was a hindrance for the public administrations, who were far from keen for their executive powers to be restricted by masterplans, regulations, rules for land use, or urban-planning projects" (LOŽKIN 2010, pp. 71f.). Besides, STANILOV (2007a, p. 10) points to the fact, that the top-down planning system "seemed to have had exhausted its social credit during the communist rule" and thus was not able to "master enough support among a public suspicious of any initiatives appearing to reinstate centralized government control". Given the lack of regulations and the refusal of comprehensive visions for future urban development, cities were soon facing problems like traffic congestion and air pollution, a lack of service infrastructures and informal developments, among others. These processes triggered the slow return of regulation systems in the period from the new millennium onwards (LOŽKIN 2010, pp. 71f.). "The lack of clear vision about how cities should grow, which dominated the early years of the transition period and was used by many private developers to maximize their short term profits, is currently bemoaned not just by the residents, who were left with the short end of the stick, and municipal authorities, who find it difficult to service the chaotically developed

urban areas, but by the private investors themselves, who have found out that good urban planning can improve the marketability of their products and, ultimately, increase their profits" (STANILOV 2007a, p. 13). Concepts and strategies are required to regain control of urban development and bring informal building activities to a hold. This is of particular interest to policymakers, as "the quality of the built environment is becoming one of the main factors in the global competition for capturing investors' attention" (STANILOV 2007a, p. 5). In this context, the 'compact European city' model has entered the urban planning discourse in post-Soviet Russia in recent years.

Various initiatives were launched to introduce the model in Russia: The model has been spread mainly through an international network of planning professionals who use the journal *Proekt Rossija* to promote Western European trends and ideas in Russia. The Dutch planner Bart Goldhoorn founded the journal in the 1990s. Furthermore, this network started to organize important events (e.g. Moscow Architecture Biennale) and international competitions (e.g. A101 Block City competition, for a documentation of the competition see TATUNAŠVILI 2011) to spread the 'compact European city' model (on the block city model see for example the issues *Proekt Rossija* 52/2009 and 73/2014). Perm' was the first city in which attempts were made to introduce the concept on a citywide level with the long-term goal of transforming an entire existing city structure based on this model. The case of Perm' provoked heavy debates among Russian urban planners and was met with resistance. Despite the rejection in Perm', the conclusion will show that the master plan developed for Perm' attained enough power and support to travel further and spread the ideas of the 'compact European city' through different channels in Russia.

### **The case of Perm'**

The paper will now turn to the case of Perm'. I will first provide a historical overview of the city's development,

which is essential in order to provide a deeper understanding of the city and its urban heritage, before addressing the urban strategy that has been launched to overcome the profound challenges arising after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I will point out the actors involved in the strategy, their aims and how planning professionals and policymakers have negotiated the concept of the 'compact European city', especially regarding the urban pasts of the city.

### A historical overview of the city's development

The city of Perm' is located about 1,200 kilometres northeast of Moscow on the foothills of the Ural Mountains. The Trans-Siberian Railway runs through it, connecting it to Moscow and more eastern regions. The river Kama along which the city has grown to a length of about 70 kilometres plays a major role in the development of the city. Regarding the territory, Perm' counts as the third largest city in Russia after Moscow and St. Petersburg. According to GOSKOMSTAT (2010a/b), Perm' counts as the 12th largest city in Russia in 2010 with 986,497 inhabitants.

Under Peter the Great, an exploration of the river Kama took place in the first quarter of the 18th century in order to find convenient places for new copper factories. In 1723 a copper factory was built on the site where the river Egošicha flows into the river Kama. In 1780 Catherine the Great decided to make this settlement the centre of the newly founded Perm' governorate and to name it Perm' (BELAVIN 2000, pp. 26f.). In 1784 the first general plan for the city was developed by the architect Ivan Lem (PERESKOKOV 2000, p. 38). A regular grid-like street system was laid out along the river Kama. The importance of this first general plan must not be underestimated, because the axes defined in this plan are present in the centre of Perm' until today. At the end of the 18th century, the copper factory was closed and the first era of the factory town – the 'gorod zavod' – came to an end. But already the second half of the

19th century brought a revival of the 'gorod-zavod': In 1863 and 1864 two cannon factories were opened (ARCHIPENKOVA et al. 2011, p. 27) and in 1871 they were combined into the famous 'Permskie pušečnye zavody'. From that time on until the late 1980s, the production of weapons played an important role in Perm'.

Until 1917, Perm' grew constantly and the population steadily increased. But during Soviet rule the city grew immensely: While in 1912 75,000 people lived in Perm' (NEČAEV 2000, p. 73), the population had grown to about more than one million inhabitants until the end of the Soviet Union (Fig. 1). Thus, most of the urban structure of Perm' was erected during Soviet rule, mainly according to modernist principles of urban design. This growth was the outcome of the rapid industrial development: Especially during the World War II many industries were evacuated from the front line to more eastern regions of the country. The Ural region became one of the most important industrial regions of the Soviet Union (MATLEY 1983, pp. 139f.) and Perm' developed into a key industrial centre with a specialization in the defence and arms industry (ARCHIPENKOVA et al. 2011, p. 28). Subsequently, the city was turned into a closed city almost until the end of the Soviet Union. From 1940 until the de-Stalinization under Chruščev in 1957 the city of Perm' was officially named Molotov.

Besides the extensive industrial development that supported the growth of the city, scattered settlements were acknowledged as part of Perm' and enlarged the city's territory. New satellite towns were planned and incorporated into the city (STEPANOV 1962, p. 66). The Swiss architect and director of the Bauhaus in Dessau (1928-1930), Hannes Meyer, was involved in planning two satellite towns: the 'Sozgorod Nižnnjaja Kur'ja' and the 'Sozgorod Gorki'. However, both projects were only partly realized. The extensive incorporations of surrounding settlements and satellite towns were not accompanied by the provision of adequate infrastructure, which led to insufficient

connections between the different districts of the city. The city, today, is hardly perceived as 'one organism'. POLETAEV (2000, pp. 5f.) calls it a 'mnogoaglomeracija' (polycentric), composed of a central core and surrounding districts, some of them being isolated and autonomous from the central core both in territorial and in social terms.

Already at the beginning of the 1930s, the 'Uraloblspolkom' (Committee of the Ural region) published an agenda on planning industrial cities in the Ural region ('Glavnejšie čerty industrial'nogo goroda na Urale') – the guidelines for urban planning in the region (KISELEV 2000, p. 232). They foresaw the division of urban functions into four zones: production, settlement (residential, social and cultural uses), green areas and infrastructure. The residential zones called 'bytovye kommuny', were planned as administratively and economically independent units with wide strips of greenery to separate the residential buildings from industrial zones. Since the 1960s residential districts were realized based on the Mikrorajon-concept. A Mikrorajon presented an independent micro-residential district, hosting up to 18,000 inhabitants. In theory, all necessary public facilities and utilities were situated within every Mikrorajon. According to WHITE (1979, p. 11), the Mikrorajon concept "is an attempt to create, within a clearly bounded geographical area, a community based on the common identity engendered by the shared use of facilities, and as such, it is a prime example of the deterministic nature of much Soviet planning". Although the implementation often fell short of the desired ideals, the Mikrorajon is regarded as one of the most prominent and visible legacies of the entire Soviet planning practice and ideology. In Perm', the residential buildings erected between 1960 and 1970 account for 25 % of the housing stock, and the large housing estates erected between 1971 and 1995 account for 45 % (KCAP 2010b, p. 14).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the era as a closed city and as an industrial centre came to an end. Since then the city has to deal with a decline of the in-

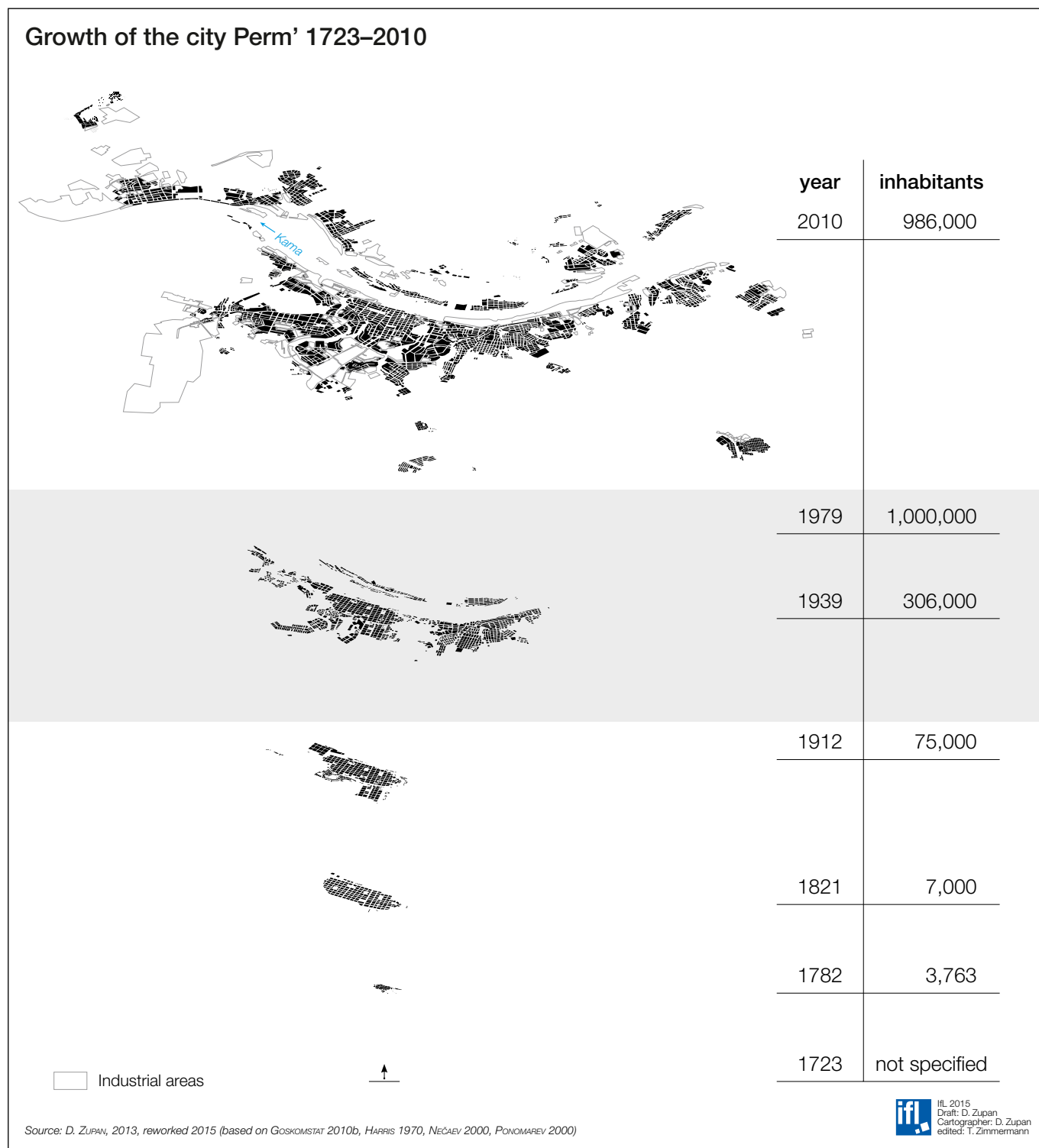


Fig. 1: Growth of the city Perm'

dustrial base, high unemployment and crime rates and a shrinking population. Since the 1990s up to the year 2010, approximately 100,000 people have left the city (MURATOV 2010, p. 58). Confronted with these challenges, a solution had to be found. ARCHIPENKOVA et al. (2011, p. 33) describe the initiated project as fol-

lows: "Due to the absence of some integral idea for development, Perm' started experimenting."

#### The Perm'-Experiment

The strategy that has been launched to overcome the above-mentioned issues contains two parts: On the one hand, a

cultural strategy has been launched to turn the city of Perm' into an international cultural centre with a focus on contemporary art. On the other hand, a master plan has been worked out to transform the urban structure of the city. Although these two parts are connected to each other, this paper will



focus mainly on the elaborated master plan.

Oleg ČIRKUNOV, the governor of the Perm' region at that time, and Sergej Gordeev, senator and the former member of the Perm' region in the Russian Federation Council can be considered the main initiators of the strategy. ČIRKUNOV was a member of the Komsomol Committee for the Perm' district from 1983 until 1985 before he moved to Switzerland. In Switzerland he worked in the Soviet trade representation before pursuing a successful business career in the 1990s (ČIRKUNOV 2010, p. 60). From 2001 on he was the representative of the Perm' region in the Russian Federation Council, from 2004 until 2005 governor of the city Perm' and from 2005 to 2012 governor of the whole Perm' region. ČIRKUNOV's (ibid.) declared aim is the modernization of the region and the 'catching-up' with Western European living standards. Sergej GORDEEV is well known in international architectural circles. He has been actively involved in urban development projects and international architectural competitions and became one of the first Russian developers working with Western European architects and urban planners in post-Soviet Russia. From 2007 to 2010 GORDEEV was a member of the Perm' region in the Russian Federation Council.

In 2008 the council founded the Bjuro gorodskich proektov (City Projects Bureau) in Perm' to guide the process of developing a master plan for the city and made Andrej Golovin the head of this institute. Following the advice of GORDEEV, the Dutch office KCAP was directly assigned to develop the plan (GORDEEV 2010, p. 63). The Dutch firm of architects and urban planners, founded by Kees Christiaanse, has established itself as one of the leading firms in urban planning and design in Western Europe with offices in Rotterdam, Zurich and Shanghai. While local planners in Perm' were accused of operating "at the level of personal 'opinion' or 'preferences'", the approach of KCAP was instead presented as in line with the current state of research and the

dominant discourse in urban planning and design (GORDEEV 2010, p. 65). According to LOŽKIN (2010, p. 70), ČIRKUNOV and GORDEEV do not present typical civil servants, but internationally connected, highly educated managers and businessmen. This assumption is used to explain why KCAP has been chosen for the task of developing the master plan: "The new generation of managers and politicians – people who are fluent in foreign languages and equally fluent in their grasp of what's happening in the world – find it easier to work with like-minded people" (MURATOV 2010, p. 58).

The invitation of internationally renowned planners with Western European expertise and knowledge was seen as a means to break with common practices of urban planning and instead to allow it to "become familiar with European standards" (ČIRKUNOV 2010, p. 62): „Perm' started earlier than other cities to find a different model of urban planning than the Soviet and post-Soviet model" (LOŽKIN 2012, p. 34). Thus, Perm' was meant to become a best practice and role model for many other Russian cities. Against this background, the question was raised if the strategy developed for Perm' could even lead to a paradigm shift in Russian urban planning and design as a whole (GOLDHOORN 2010, p. 83). In the long term, breaking with established practices and making urban planning a central topic aimed at bringing untrained developments of the post-Soviet period to a hold and creating an attractive urban environment (KCAP 2010a, p. 20) – a quality that is often denied in Perm': "Perm' today is not a very attractive city. It is incoherent, poorly looked after, cut off from its river (the river Kama) by railway tracks, and built up with districts of prefab houses and pretentious colossi of the kind that used to be erected in the era that was recently brought to an end by the economic crisis. In fact, Perm' fails to enchant both visitors and its own natives" (MURATOV 2010, p. 58). The improvement of the quality of the urban environment should in turn bring young and highly educated

people as well as the creative class to Perm' – and thus make the city attractive for business (ČIRKUNOV 2010, pp. 61f.). For the short time, inviting foreign professionals, encouraging a debate on future urban planning in Russia and creating a new urban image was meant to bring attention to the city (ibid.).

What is the content of the master plan and why did it provoke a widespread debate? The aim of the master plan is "to turn Perm' into a city that is comfortable to live in by European standards. A city that will be mid-rise, compact, consisting of multifunctional street blocks, and possessing landscaped streets, embankments, and parks" (MURATOV 2010, p. 58). To make the city more attractive, KCAP proposes to transform the whole city into a grid city based on classical European urban design principles, justifying this approach as follows: "The historic European character of Perm' provides a starting point for the application of urban planning principles derived from the European tradition" (KCAP 2010a, p. 8). Thus, the master plan takes as its basis the pre-revolutionary core of the city, relying on the historical-European character of it. The historical pre-Soviet core, however, constitutes only a very small part of the city (Fig. 2).

The principles of the master plan are based on the 'compact European city' model and demonstrate the proposed direction of development for the upcoming decades (KCAP 2010a, pp. 10f.): Perm' shall become a compact city with a reasonable ecological footprint and medium density. Therefore, the aim is a densification of the fragmented urban fabric. Regarding the transport system, Perm' should become an open, walkable city with a focus on eco-friendly mobility (public transport, walking and cycling). Furthermore, Perm' shall be transformed into a grid city with a clearly articulated separation of streets, squares and courtyards. The mixed-use concept and the separation of public and private spaces through the usage of the urban block instead of the Mikrorajon concept are recommended (ibid.).

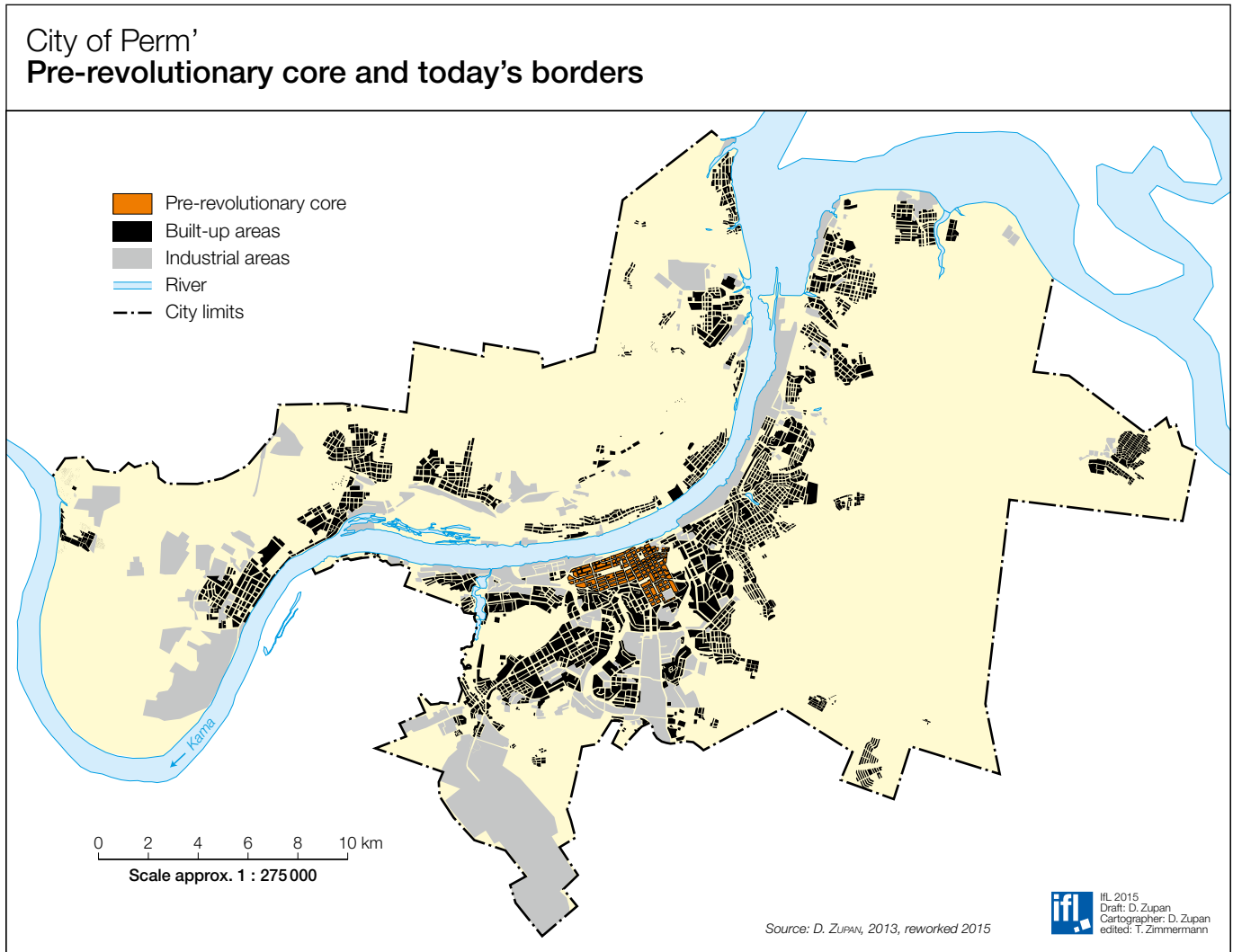


Fig. 2: Map of the city Perm': pre-revolutionary core and today's borders

The Mikrorajon model, originating from the Soviet era, still presents the dominant model in post-Soviet Russia, although in a modified form (BOKOVA 2009, p. 70). It is being backed up by all kinds of regulations, existing building standards and the monopoly of the construction industry (ibid.). Contemporary realizations of the model show mostly free standing, high-rise and standardised buildings (GOLDHOORN 2014, p. 86). Initiators and proponents of the strategy in Perm' argue that contemporary urban planning in Russia is to be understood as a (slightly) modified continuation of Soviet planning and presents a backward model: "[A] late modernist urban landscape that disappeared from West European planning practice over thirty years ago is still being reproduced in Russia" (ibid.). Contemporary principles of urban planning in Rus-

sia, like the *Mikrorajon* concept, are described as "unacceptable from the point of view of modern standards of quality of life" (MURATOV 2010, p. 58). Asked instead about advantages and specific qualities of Russian cities in comparison to European cities, GORDEEV (2010, p. 67) responds: "I think that the unprecedented weight of all of the problems created by the efforts of past and present city legislators is a resource for Russian cities. These problems cannot be solved naturally."

Although research has already stressed the need for local, in-depth analysis instead of the adoption of the dominant discourse of modernism as a failed project (e.g. HAUMANN and WAGNER-KYORA 2013, with a focus on postsocialist countries see WAGENAAR and DINGS 2004), the actors involved put forward common argu-

ments against modernist urban planning: Firstly, the monotonous appearance and the lack of aesthetic quality is criticized: "When one is surrounded by the same drab, grey buildings, they feel like a cog in a soulless machine" (ČIRKUNOV 2010, p. 61). Secondly, modernist urbanism is accused of being the reason for the current neglect of large areas of the urban environment. Under modernism, floating spaces with interspersed buildings were erected, often without clearly marking the boundaries between private and public space. Furthermore, the block-city enables residents to watch what is happening on the street. Thus, the block city allows shifting responsibilities of maintenance and security from the public to the individual. Finally, the urban model of the block-city is presented as a tool to influence Russian society: Proponents ar-

gue that the model has “the ability (...) to organize communal life” and is capable of creating “a new sense of community to replace both the collectivist ideal of the Soviet era and the egocentricity of the last decades” (GOLDHOORN n.y.). Opponents of the strategy argue instead that grid-based urban structures are not in accordance with local geographical and climate conditions: According to VOTINOVA et al. (2010), wide and large green spaces and a maximum of sunlight in the short summer time are required – elements that cannot be achieved through grid-like dense structures.

### Resisting the master plan

The main focus of the strategy in Perm' lay on the connection to Europe and this objective was used to justify the whole approach, because “[m]odels that (appear to) come from somewhere travel with the license of pragmatic credibility, and models that emanate from the ‘right’ places invoke positive associations of (preferred forms of) best practice” (PECK and THEODORE 2010, p. 171). However, it was this intention of invoking positive associations that led to resistance, because the proposed strategy conveyed notions of superiority, while local know-how was presented as backward. Consequently, local experts formed a strong opposition and published an open letter against the strategy in the newspaper *Zvezda* (VOTINOVA et al. 2010). Especially the focus on Europe and the use and transfer of European trends and strategies have been heavily criticized: “They [KCAP] loaded the unbearable burden on their shoulders to create a comfortable home for Russian people according to their ideas and understandings” (ibid., author's translation). The local planners accused KCAP of systematically denying local resources, regulations and standards, and especially Soviet and post-Soviet urban concepts (e.g. the Mikrorajon concept).

The master plan presents an instrument that is – in contrast to the instrument of the general plan – not common practice in Russia. General plans for cities include the basics for future urban de-

velopment, such as land use, information on population growth, infrastructure, etc. They are usually created for a period of twenty years. The elaborated master plan developed for Perm' contains a compilation of principles to guide the development of the city over the next fifty years. It has no legal basis but serves as a recommendation only, a fact that hampers the implementation process. The master plan did not take into account national planning rules and local conditions such as the small-scale land ownership distribution, existing building standards and local climatic and geographical conditions. This led to clashes between the aims of the master plan and national planning norms and resulted in problems, as soon as the general plan was meant to be prepared based on the recommendations of the master plan. After approving the master plan in 2010, the Bjuro gorodskich proektov commenced with the task of preparing the general plan. Since 2009 investigations were carried out against Andrej Golovin, head of the Bjuro gorodskich proektov (the charges against him were dropped recently). The accusations included the fact that KCAP had been commissioned directly to work out the master plan without carrying out a competition. Furthermore, the plan is not based on national regulations and standards and thus cannot be easily implemented into the general plan.

Besides these aspects, the neoliberal urban development and the powerful role of investors and construction industries influenced the process. On the one hand, a paradigm shift can threaten existing routines and power structures. On the other hand, however, the refusal of regulations on urban development after the collapse of the Soviet system, which resulted in uncontrolled building activities, leads to the necessity of introducing new regulation systems. The creation of urban visions for the future development of cities and planning models to guide these processes are required. The increasing role of city marketing can thus be understood as a driving factor as contemporary images involve a high quality of the built

environment to participate in the harsh competition of cities.

Finally, the urban structures themselves acted as an allowing and resisting infrastructure: Most of Perm's urban environment is resistant to a quick transformation, as the city was built up mainly according to modernist principles of urban design. The pre-revolutionary core of the city, however, can be considered an allowing and supporting infrastructure. Although this part covers just a small part of the city, it was used to justify the proposed morphological transformation of the built structures (from modernist urbanism to the block city).

The drawn up image focuses on Europe, while local values, at least as far as the socialist past and the current postsocialist present are concerned, were deliberately pushed into the background. Herein a ‘Europeanization’ can be observed, a trend that is present in many postsocialist countries and that focuses on the connection with Western Europe, as this represents „an important source of symbolic capital which is essential for post-socialist transformation given the lack of economic capital“ (YOUNG and KACZMAREK 2008, p. 53). Associations with the “East” and the socialist past – the “unwanted past” – are rejected, while at the same time the pre-revolutionary “Golden Age” of the city is emphasized (ibid.). The strategy used in recent years should draw attention to the city in order to attract investment and new residents. Although the ability of city marketing as a development strategy has been questioned (e.g. WARD 2005, pp. 729f.; FRIEDMANN 2006, p. 4), the on-going trend for major events, attention-grabbing buildings and for the production of images and city branding demonstrates that a shift has not taken place. Instead, the urban environment is becoming part of the produced image too. The master plan for Perm' draws a glossy picture of a future „clean“ and “rich” city, a development that is not mainly dependent on which principles of urban planning are used but instead requires a significant economic upturn, public investment and an appropriate appreciation of



the existing urban heritage and history. Given the fact that a re-evaluation and a critical deconstruction of the dominant Western discourse of modernism as a failed project has already begun, it can be argued that the refusal of the master plan in Perm' should be understood as an opportunity for the city to develop concepts based on local assets and requirements.

## Conclusion

In order to participate in the fierce competition for investment and growth, city branding and the production of images have become important tasks of urban development in post-Soviet Russia. In Perm', the model of the 'compact European city' is therefore, on the one hand, 'sold' as a product for the transformation of Perm' into a prospering, international, 'European' city. On the other hand, it aims at overcoming uncontrolled post-Soviet urban developments and offers a clear vision for the future development of the city. The concept was presented as an already fully developed and applicable model for city planning, created on the basis of 'European standards'. The concept is negotiated as a solution for problems concerning the urban structure of the city and is presented as a counter-model to Soviet and post-Soviet urbanism. It carries with it a discourse of modernist urbanism as a failed project that has to be overcome, a notion, that the actors involved applied both to Soviet and post-Soviet urbanism. The initiators as well as the urban planners of KCAP understand the urban legacies of the socialist and the postsocialist past as a burden for future development, describing it as backward and not in line with progressive urbanism. Instead, the strategy builds on the 'European' character of the pre-revolutionary core of the city. By applying the model of the 'compact European city' to Perm', the pre-Soviet urban heritage is being re-evaluated and has gained the status of a valuable resource on which to base future urban concepts.

The concept of hybrid spatialities of transition (GOLUBCHIKOV et al. 2013) provides a useful framework to cope with

the complex interplay of neoliberal and capitalist transition and specific local and historical legacies. Understanding legacies as relative, fluid and transformative and acting as co-producers of postsocialist spatialities (ibid., p. 14) allows to go beyond an understanding of the socialist legacy as fading away and being replaced. The analysis of the negotiations of actors involved revealed, that local structures (economic and political context, planning regulations, geographical conditions, the existing urban legacies etc.) and actors acted as an infrastructure of the model: The master plan did not take into account existing planning regulations, building standards or local conditions. It presents an instrument that serves as a recommendation only, a fact that further hampered the implementation process. The urban structures themselves act as an allowing and resisting infrastructure: While the Soviet and post-Soviet urban structures were seen as the contrasting layers, resistant, however, to a quick transformation, the pre-revolutionary core was presented as the justifying and supporting layer for the whole strategy. Furthermore, the neoliberal urban development and the powerful role of investors and construction industries act as a resisting and transforming infrastructure. However, the increasing role of city marketing acts as a driving factor as contemporary images involve a high quality of the built environment to participate in the harsh competition. While the master plan (KCAP 2010a, 2010b) contains all the principles widely associated with the 'compact European city' model, the local negotiation-processes reveal, that only selected elements like the morphological structure of the block city and the quality of the built environment have been discussed. Other elements like participation strategies and the opening up of the technocratic planning process were hardly apparent in the local discourse. The concept evolved from within the existing infrastructure and has been shaped by it, while at the same time re-shaping the infrastructure and the local context. Based on these findings, I would further suggest

conceptualizing modernist and postmodernist urbanism too not as fixed, but as relational and fluid conceptions, resulting in varieties of (post-)modernist urban landscapes.

In Perm', the master plan was developed top-down, without sufficient involvement of local experts or the public. This led to resistance, heavy criticism and clashes between the top-down-strategy of political stakeholders and local experts in the field of urban planning. Local actors and structures refused to accept a model that carried with it an evaluation of most of the city's structure as a 'failed project of modernism'. The local debates centred on the question if the direct transfer of European role models is a suitable way or if instead creating an appreciation of local history and heritage, building on existing assets and creating an own path is the right direction (ROGOŽNIKOV 2010, p. 200). The strategy in Perm' was launched and supported to a great extent by Čirkunov and Gordeev – however, both politicians stepped back between 2010 and 2012 – a fact, that further reduced the support of the master plan. Furthermore, in 2013 the former chief architect of Perm' Sergej Šamarin, one the strongest opponents and co-author of the published letter against the master plan (VOTINOV et al. 2010), became the head of the Bjuro gorodskich proektov. Given the fact that a re-evaluation and a critical deconstruction of the dominant Western discourse of modernism as a failed project has already begun, it can be argued that the refusal of the master plan in Perm' should be understood as an opportunity for the city to develop concepts based on local assets and requirements.

Although the strategy in Perm' has been met with heavy resistance, proponents still argue, that the master plan can serve as a blue print for many other Russian cities. It has been promoted a lot inside Russia, for example, it was awarded the Gran Prix at the second Biennale of Architecture in Moscow. According to NILINA (2013), former senior expert at KCAP and lecturer at the Moscow Architecture School, the students already use



the master plan as a rulebook. She (ibid.) further claims that the head of the general planning institute of Moscow has a master plan of Perm' on his desk. After various rather unsuccessful attempts to implement the model in Russia, it has now made its way to Moscow's urban policy: In August 2013 Sergej Kuznecov, the new chief-architect of Moscow and owner of a Moscow-based architectural firm (SPEECH) announced that new residential projects in Moscow should follow the principles of the urban block. The only foreign advisor of the Moscow Council of Architecture is Hans Stimmann, a German urban planner and the former city architect of Berlin. Stimmann had been involved in the 'Planwerk Innenstadt', a concept that proposed the reconstruction of Berlin based on classical European principles of urban design (block city) at the expense of post-war modernism. He can be regarded as one of the most powerful and influential proponents of the 'compact European city' model in Germany. First examples of the re-emergence of the urban block in and around Moscow were shown at the Moscow Biennale of Architecture 2014. The projects demonstrate how existing urban planning standards, the neoliberal shift in urban development and the powerful role of the construction industry with its focus on rationalization and standardization form the model in specific ways. In the current debate on Moscow's new urban policy, the model of the block city is presented not merely as an improvement in contrast to modernist Soviet and post-Soviet urbanism, but even as the nearly 'natural' and 'logical' form of market-driven urban development (GOLDHOORN 2014, p. 87).

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## Резюме

ДАНИЭЛА ЦУПАН

### Дебаты по «глобальным» концепциям планирования на местном уровне: модель «компактного европейского города» в постсоциалистической России на примере Перми

Несмотря на то, что городское планирование и проектирование является дисциплиной, которая в значительной степени зависит от международных и межгородских связей, городские ландшафты на глобальном уровне далеки от того, чтобы говорить о конвергенции, они в большей степени демонстрируют местные особенности и новые формы различий. В области городского планирования и проектирования концепция компактного европейского города потеснила парадигму функционального модернизма. Хотя этот концепт также подвергался критике, он в Центральной и Западной Европе стал преобладающим. В предлагаемой статье исследуется, как модель компактного европейского города находит путь в Россию. На примере Перми демонстрируется, что указанный концепт является альтернативной моделью, по сравнению с советским и постсоветским градостроительством. Кроме того, он представлен в качестве продукта преобразования российских городских агломераций в цветущие, «европейские» города. Местные акторы, структуры и градостроительное наследие действуют как (способствующая, преобразующая, препятствующая или противодействующая) инфраструктура для данной модели, которая на примере Перми, в конечном счёте привела к провалу указанной стратегии. В работе использованы два вида литературных источников, во-первых, научная литература по глобальному переносу урбанистических концепций и, во-вторых, исследования, посвящённые постсоциалистическим городам, которые концептуально формулируют роль (городского) наследия в рамках текущего переходного периода.

Пермь, Россия, перенос городских концепций, компактная европейская модель города

## Résumé

DANIELA ZUPAN

### Débats locaux sur les concepts de planification «mondiale»: le modèle de «ville européenne compacte» en Russie post-socialiste – Le cas de Perm'

Bien que la planification et l'aménagement urbain représentent une discipline fortement influencée par les échanges internationaux et interurbains, les paysages urbains sont loin de se ressembler; bien au contraire, ils révèlent les particularités locales ainsi que de nouvelles formes de disparité. Dans le secteur de la planification et l'aménagement urbain, le concept de ville européenne compacte a remplacé le modèle du modernisme fonctionnaliste. Bien qu'il ait également été contesté, le concept a atteint un statut hégémonique en Europe centrale et occidentale. Cet article a pour objectif de retracer la manière dont le modèle de ville européenne compacte s'étend vers la Russie. En prenant le cas de Perm' pour exemple, il est démontré que le concept est présenté comme un contre modèle de l'urbanisme soviétique et post-soviétique. De plus, il est annoncé comme un produit permettant de transformer les agglomérations russes en villes «européennes» prospères et internationales. Les acteurs locaux, les structures locales et le patrimoine urbain servent d'infrastructure pour le modèle (pour permettre, transformer, empêcher ou résister), qui a finalement fait échouer la stratégie dans le cas de Perm'. L'article met en œuvre deux corpus, comprenant d'une part les recherches sur le transfert mondial des concepts urbains et d'autre part les études sur les villes post-socialistes qui conceptualisent le rôle du patrimoine (urbain) durant la transition en cours.

Perm', Russie, transfert des concepts urbains, modèle de ville européenne compacte